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Muktaka Kavya of Kashmir

by

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A MUKTAKA KAVYA OF KASHMIR

—(*Ved Kumari Ghai*)

The poets and the rhetoricians of Kashmir have made a great contribution in the field of Sanskrit poetry and poetics. Endowed with a wonderful creative ability, they have created all sorts of *Kavyas, i.e. Mahakavyas, Khandkavyas, Muktakavyas, Aitihasikakavyas, Nitikavyas, Stutikavyas*, etc. All the important schools of Indian poetics, namely *Rasa, Alamkara, Riti, Vakroti, Dhvani*, and *Aucitya* took birth and flourished in Kashmir. Nothing significant remains of Ancient Indian poetics without the works of rhetoricians like Bhamaha, Vamana, Udbhata, Rudrata, Anandavardhan, Mahimabhatta, Abhinavagupta, Mammata and Ksemendra and the historical poetry of Sanskrit loses much in quantity and quality if writings of Kalhana, Bilhana, Jonaraja and Srivara are removed from it.

Herein I deal with only one *Muktaka Kavya* of Kashmir, which has not received due attention of the writers of the history of Sanskrit literature. A *Muktaka* has heen defined thus in Agni Purana :—

मुक्तकं श्लोक एवैकश्चमत्कारक्षमः सताम् ।

Agni Pu. 337.36

"*Muktaka* is in an independent verse, which is capable of producing miraculous effect on the noble minds. The words श्लोक एवैक : stress the independent character of *Muktaka*, which does not depend on other verses for its plot, sentiment etc. Sahityadarpanakara Visvanatha also points out this self-dependence of Muktaka by saying :—

छन्दोबद्धपदं पद्यं तेन मुक्तेन मुक्तकम् ।

Sahityadarpana, 6.314 is has been defined thus :—

विनाकृतं विरहितं व्यवच्छिन्नं विशेषितम् ।

भिन्नं स्यादथ निर्व्यूह मुक्तं यो वातिशोभनः ॥

Here the epithets, विनाकृत विरहित व्यवच्छिन्न and भिन्न, describe the independent nature of this poetry while the epithets, निर्व्यूह, विशेषित and अतिशोभन, point out its completeness by itself. A few uninteresting verses can be easily tolerated in a Prabandhakavya, without marrying the beauty of the whole, because the reader's curiousity about further development of the story induces him to move fast, ignoring insignificant verses, and his prior acquintance with the characters of the work quickens his

imagination for a quick grasp of the sense. In a *Muktaka*, on the other hand, the attention is focussed on a single verse which *shives* out with all its merits and defects. It is justified, therefore, if critics expect a *Muktaka* to be (चमत्कारक्षम), capable of producing astonishment and (प्रति-शोभन) highly attractive. A real Muktaka makes the reader plunge into the ocean of highest bliss after setting him free (मुक्त) from all other objects. Praising *Muktakas* of Amaruka, Anandavardhana has regarded them as good as full-fledged works in point of charm. He says :—

मुक्तकेषु हि प्रबन्धोष्विव रसबन्धाभिनिवेशिन: कवयो
द्रश्यन्ते यथा अमरुकस्य कवेर्मुक्तकाः श्रृंगारस्यान्दिन:
प्रबन्धायमाना प्रसिद्धा एव । ध्वन्यालोक, 3, 7

i.e. Poets are seen to be intent on delineating sentiments in Muktakas as in full-fledged literary works. Thus the Muktakas of Amaru are famous for their profession in the Erotic sentiment and they are regarded as good as full-fledged works in point of Charm.

Muktaka works are of two types, *Kosa* and *Sanghata*. A collection of various verses on different topics is called *Kosa*, and a collection of various verses on one topic is called *sanghata*. From the point of view of contents, the *Muktakas* can be placed under various categories such as *Srngara Muktaka*, *Niti-Muktaka*, *Bhakti-Muktaka*. Kashmir has made a notable contribution to this branch of Sanskrit poetry. *Devi Sataka* of Anandavardhan, Isvarasataka of Avatara, of Dinakrandana Stotra of Lostra. Vakroktipancasika of Ratnakara Ratnasataka of Ratnakantha come under *Bhakti Muktakas* and Bhallata Sataka of Kavi Bhallata, Anyoktimuktalata of Sambhu, Santisataka of Silhana, Carucarya Caturvargasangraha and Darpadalana of Ksemendra are Niti-Muktakas. Bilhana's Caurapancasika can be designated as a Srngara Sataka. Amongst Muktaka Kosas, Suktimuktavali of Jalhana, Subhasitavali of Vallabhadeva and Subhasitavali of Srivara are famous. Of these Muktakas the most effective and powerful are those written in Anyapadesa style and the earliest known Anyapadesa Sataka comes from a Kashmiri poet Bhallata whose verses have been quoted in Anandavardhana's Dhvanyaloka. This Anyapadesa poetry really fulfils the ideal of literature as criticism of life. A product of deep and poignant experience of the poet, it comes out when the poet's mind is full of thoughts which find no outlet otherwise. Taking recourse to suggestion the poet delineates some images from nature or other spheres of life, and suggests through them more effectively and more efficiently what would have been expressed through direct statement of facts. Bhallata Sataka is an evidence of this fact.

Bhallata lived during the time of Sankaravarma, who was son and and successor of Avantivarma. Kalhana has compared Avantivarma

with Mandhata and his reign with Krit age, when everybody was happy and contented. He has also mentioned that various eminent poets and scholars like Muktakana, Sivasvami, Anandavardhan and Ratnakara were patronized by him. The times however changed for the worse during Sankaravarma's reign. Soon after his accession to the throne, he turned a tyrant and began to oppress the people. Kalhana informs that he levied heavy taxes on the villages and did not leave even the temple properties untouched. Great poets like Bhallata had to live with out any means of livelihood while Lavata who was a mere load-bearer got from him a rich salary of 2000/- dinaras.

Most probably Bhallata had seen the happy period of Avantivarma and so when he saw the rule of terror, his mind burst out through an Anyokti on the sun and the darkness. He says :—

पात: पूष्णों भवति महते नोपतापाय यस्मात्
काल़ेनास्तं के इह्न ययुर्यान्ति यास्यन्ति चान्ये ।
एतावत्तु व्यथयतितरां लोकबाह्यैस्तमोभि:
तस्मिन्नेव प्रकृतिमहृति व्योम्नि लब्धोऽवकाश: ॥ भ० श० 10

Here the poet presents two images, one is that of the shining sun and the other is that of pitch darkness of the dark night. Avantivarma's reign was a shining period which has been followed by a dark night. Bhallata is pained to see that some flatterer has given the name Khadyota (Skyilluminator) to a small shining insect, a name which fits only for the sun and could not even be applied to the moon. The reference is to the ruler who did not deserve the praise he was being given.

सूर्यादन्यत्र यच्चन्द्रऽप्ययसंस्पर्शि तत्कृतम् ।
खद्योत इति कीटस्य नाम तुष्टेन केनचित् ॥

He is further disgusted to find that riches go to those who do not deserve them and desert the wise. Not only this much, the rich do not even tolerate any praise of the good people.

श्रीर्विश्रृंखलाभिसारिका वर्त्मभिर्घनतममोमसीमसै: ।
शब्दमात्रमपि सोढुमक्षमा भूषणस्त गुणिन: समुत्थितम् ॥

Bhallata feels sorry at this state of affairs that even the wise in the kingdome of king Sankaravarma do dot speak against his atrocities. They are expected to mend the matters with their merits but they do not do anything lest they be deprived of their riches. Bhallata refers to this fact by asking the lotus as to why it has covered its long white threads (गुणा:=merits) and then says that it must be out of the fear that the goddess of wealth would not set in otherwise.

किं दीर्घदीगुणेषु गुणेषु पद्म सितेष्ववच्छादनकारणंते ।
प्रस्त्येव तान्पश्यति चेदनार्या त्रस्तेवलक्ष्मीर्न पदं विधत्ते ॥

An employer who does not realize the difficulties who of his employees deserves condemnation and Bhallata expresses surprise at an employee's obstinacy in clinging to such a master who is inconsistent in his speech, who listens to anybody's words, who is arrogant and has lost all discrimination between his own people and his enemies. His hands are always empty for his employees. The idea is expressed through an Anyokti about the elephant and the bee who represent through paronomastic substantives and paronomastic adjectives, the images of a repulsive master and a devoted servant.

सोऽपूर्वो रसनाविपर्ययविधिस्तत्कर्णयोश्चापलं
दृष्टिः सा मदविस्मृतस्वपरदिक्कि भूयसोक्तेन वा ।
पूर्वं निश्चितवानसि भ्रमर हे यद्वारणोऽद्याप्यसा—
वन्तः शून्यकरो निषेव्यत इति भ्रातः क एष ग्रहः ।।

Bhallata praises vocal people through an image of a conch-shall. It may be said that the conch-shall is a mere bove or that it is broken or that it is dead or that it speaks with the force of fair supplied by others but there is no doubt that whatever it speaks has good meaning and is worth listening.

शङ्खोऽस्थिशेषः स्फुटितो मृतो वा
प्रोच्छ्वास्यतेऽन्यश्वसितेन सत्यम् ।
कितूच्चरत्येव न सोऽस्य शब्दः
श्राव्यो न यो यो न सदर्थशंसी ।। म० 27

Bhallata's views about policy are hinted at in various Muktakas. In verse 79, he describes the duties of a king through Aprastutaprasamsa based on slesa :—

पुंस्त्वादपि प्रविचलेद्यदि यद्यधोऽपि
मायाद्यदि प्रणयनेन महानपि स्यात् ।
अभ्युद्धरेत्तदपि विश्वमितीदृशीयं
केनापि दिक् प्रकटिता पुरुषोत्तमेन ।।

"If he would lose manhood, if he would go down, if he would become low in supplication, even then he would save the Universe thus a direction of this kind is here revealed by same indescribable Purusottama." Here the paronomastic substantive Parusottama which means Vishnu as well as king and the paronomastic epithets refer to a king who is placed in difficult situation but is advised not to lose heart and save his country even at the cost of his own personal interests.

Hinting at the dark future of the country due to the cruel policies of the tyrant ruler Sankaravarma, Bhallata presents an Anyokti about a forest and a hunter.

मृत्योरास्यमिवाततं धनुरिदं चाशीविषाभा शराः
शिक्षा सापि जितार्जुनप्रभृतिका सर्वत्र निम्नाकृतिः ।
अन्तः क्रौर्यमहो शठस्य मधुरं हा हारि गेयं मुखे
व्याधस्यास्य यथा भविष्यति तथा मन्ये वनं निर्मृगम् ।। भ० 97

This bow is wide like the yawning mouth of Death, the arrows are like the quick poison, his skil excels that of Arjuna, agility is perceptible in every part of the body. Alas ! this fowler, a rogue, has cruelty at heart and a sweet enchanting song on his lips. So I think that the forest will be bereft of all animals.

Ksemendra in his Aucityavicaracarca has praised the propriety of the future tense form भविष्यति. He says "Here the fowler's bow, arrow, skill, agility, cruelty and song, all these are such that the forest will be bereft of animals. The future tense brings out the heart-bewitching properiety." How forcefully has he depicted the lamentable state of affairs prevelant in his times.

Further he points out that a king may be possessed of all the qualities, but if he has internal troubles within his state and attacks from the enemies from out, all his qualities vanish away.

In the blowing wind of injustice, Bhallata finds undeserving people posted on high positions and he gives vent to his feelings of displeasure by scolding the wind thus :

कोऽयंभ्रान्तिप्रकारस्तव पवन पदं लोकपादाहतानां
तेजस्विव्रातसेव्ये नभसि नयसि यत्पांसुपूरं प्रतिष्ठाम् ।
अस्मिन्नुत्थाप्यमाने जननयनपथोपद्रवस्तावदास्ताम्
केनोपायेन साध्यो वपुषि कलुषता दोष एव त्वयैव ।। भ० श० 99

What a wrong behaviour is this O wind ! The dust which deserves to be crushed by the feet of the people is being taken by you to the high sky, a place for group of illuminaries ! You may not care for obstruction in the sight of the people, but what about the dirt you have put on your own body ! How is that to be removed ?

Bhallata gives a very heart-pinching condemnation of man's ingratitude towards a noble man wholly devoted to the service of others. He says :—

किं जातोऽसि चतुष्पथे घनतरच्छायोऽसि किं
छायया युक्तश्चेत् फलितोऽसि किं फलभरैराढ्योऽपि किं संनतः ।
हे सद्वृक्ष सहस्व सम्प्रति सखे शाखाशिखाकर्षण—
क्षोभाभोटनभञ्जनानि जनतः स्वैरेव दुश्चेष्टितैः ।। भ० श० 39

"O noble tree why were you born at a junction of four roads ? Why did you have dense shade ? Endowed with shade why did you

bear fruits ? Well, if you had a wealth of fruits, why did you bend so low ? Now as a result of your own misdeeds, tolerate the pulling, shaking, crushing and breaking of the tips of your branches by the people."

Some verses of Bhallata have a touch of romance also. The complaint of a lady in separation has been registered in a very touching style. The rainy season has awakened the pangs of separation by means of fragrant breezes, thundering clouds, dancing peacocks and frightening lightening. She has no complaint against the breeze, the peacock and the cloud because all of them are hard-hearted males and do not realize the agony of a beloved separated from her lover but she has real complaint against the lightening who has been hitting her hard, though being a lady, she should have realized her heartache and adopted a sympathetic attitude.

वाता वान्तु कदम्बरेणुबहला नृत्यन्तु सर्पद्विषः
सोत्साहा नवतोयदानगुरवो मुञ्चन्तु नादं घनाः ।
मग्नां कान्तवियोगदुःखदहने मां वीक्ष्य दीनाननां
विद्युत्स्फुरसि त्वमप्यकरुणे ! स्त्रीत्वेऽपि तुल्ये सति ॥

The poetry of Bhallata has a charm of its own. We see in it not only the poet's art of personifying objects of nature but also a capacity to intermingle his own personality with them. The rivers, the mountains, the birds and the animals all share his experiences and express them faithfully.

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